

SDSU student panel highlights Chamber's Business Support Forum

How can I get students to come to my business? That question was the focus of the January Business Support Forum sponsored by the Brookings Area Chamber of Commerce.

Roxanne Lucchesi from the SDSU Department of Journalism and Mass Communication lead the panel of five students through a discussion of how they shop, when they shop, and where they shop. The participating students are majoring in advertising and ag communications.

Special offers are important to the students. "If a restaurant has a reward card, like buy ten and get one free, I'm more likely to keep going back there," explained senior Chris Kappen of Sioux Falls. "We also like to use coupons. Students use the coupons in the fall coupon book and in the planners that are sold at the SDSU Bookstore."

The students agreed that they tend to find a lot of promotions and events in September. They encouraged businesses to consider doing this later in the year such as October or November to help them stand out from the rest.

"Stores also should know that students who live on campus tend to stay on campus. They don't like to move their cars from the parking lot, so the stores have to go to the students," explained Holly Coldman of Montrose.

One of the best ways to go to the students is through sponsorship opportunities. Their suggestions included speaking at a club meeting, offering a meeting room for club meetings, or providing a meal, snack, or product samples at an event.

"Our clubs like to hear from local experts in the field, so sharing your expertise at a meeting might bring more students to your business," suggested Brandon DeBoer of Clear Lake.

The University Program Council can assist local businesses in identifying sponsorship opportunities. Another opportunity to meet students is at the Campus Community Fall Festival, held each September in the Student Union.

Social networks serve as an important tool in reaching students. Facebook, Twitter and Four square are used extensively by students and substitute for "word-of-mouth" advertising.

"Now, instead of telling just one classmate about the great service I received at a local business, I can share it with hundreds of friends through a Facebook post," said Coldman.

DeBoer added, “I was sitting with a friend of mine at a local restaurant recently and mentioned that on Four square. Within fifteen minutes, we’d been joined by several other friends.”

The students on the panel suggested that business owners who aren’t familiar with these networking tools could ask a student employee to take care of that advertising for them.

Most students are in class or on campus during regular working hours, so they tend to shop at stores that are open after 5 p.m.

“Brookings has a lot of great places to eat and shop,” commented DeBoer. “Those places could reach more students if they would come to us, offer us an incentive, and use social networking.”



Those participating in the Business Support Forum include Professor Roxanne Lucchesi, SDSU Dept. of Journalism and Mass Communication Brandon DeBoer, Clear Lake Nicole Stevens, Pipestone, MN Chris Kappen, Sioux Falls Holly Coldman, Montrose Alex Johnson, Hendricks, MN